

Foundation

TOPICS INCLUDE:

- Beliefs and Philosophy
- Mission Statement
- Idaho Standards for Students:
 - Academic and Professional-Technical Development
 - Life and Career Development
 - Personal and Social Development

The program's foundation serves as the solid ground upon which the rest of the program is built. The decisions made during this process become the *what* of the program. *What* will every student know and be able to do? Designing a strong foundation requires cooperative effort with parents or guardians, staff members and the community to determine what every student will receive as a benefit of a school counseling program. During the development stages, stakeholders are consulted when creating the philosophy, mission and overall program focus. The completed foundation is essential to ensuring the school counseling program is an integral part of the total educational program for student success. Elements include beliefs, philosophy, mission statement and Idaho standards for student academic and professional-technical development, life and career development, and personal and social development.

Beliefs and Philosophy

Beliefs are personal and must be discussed early in the process of developing a school counseling program philosophy. Beliefs about students, families, teachers, and the educational process are crucial in supporting success for every student. Our beliefs are derived from our own background and experiences, and beliefs drive behavior.

Dialogue is required to ensure that counseling teams and departments explore complex issues from many points of view. All team members examine their own personal beliefs and share them with their teams. Beliefs are not right or wrong; they are what drive us to advocate for our students.

Each team member should contribute to the discussion of the following questions:

1. What do we believe about achievement for every student?
2. Do we believe all students can achieve, given proper support?
3. Do we believe there are differences in learning styles for students and that children respond differently?
How do we react to those responses?
4. What do we believe about the program's ability to provide academic and professional-technical development, life and career development, personal and social development for every student?
5. When we look at the school's mission of academic achievement,

- what responsibility does the school counseling program have to support this mission?
6. What do we believe about educational reform and the professional school counselor's role in it?
 7. What do we believe about the role of parents or guardians, staff and community members within the school counseling program?

Assumptions

The philosophy of a school counseling program is often based on certain assumptions. These assumptions will identify and briefly describe the foundation upon which a school counseling program rests. Assumptions give the program its shape and direction, its nature and structure. As an example, consider the following assumptions:

A school counseling program:

- Reaches every student.
- Is comprehensive in scope.
- Is preventative in design.
- Is developmental in nature.
- Is an integral part of a total educational program for student success.
- Selects measurable student competencies based on local need in the academic and professional-technical, life and career, and personal and social domains.
- Has a delivery system that includes school guidance curriculum, individual student planning, responsive services, and program support.
- Is implemented by professional school counselors.
- Is conducted in collaboration with all stakeholders.
- Uses data to drive program decisions.
- Monitors student progress.
- Measures both process and outcome results, and analyzes critical data elements.
- Seeks improvement each year based on results.
- Shares success with stakeholders.

Agreeing on program assumptions is the next step. After reviewing the above list of assumptions, school counseling teams should create their own list of assumptions to build into their school counseling philosophy.

Philosophy

The philosophy is an agreed-upon set of guiding principles an individual follows when implementing the school counseling program (Johnson & Johnson, 2001). It is important that all personnel involved in managing and implementing the program achieve consensus on each belief or guiding principle contained within the philosophy statement. A statement of philosophy is:

- A set of beliefs that motivates program innovations.
- A set of values visible to all.
- A set of principles guiding professional contributions.
- A statement of professional conduct.
- A statement committing counselors to continuous professional growth.
- A source of collective power.

When developing a philosophy, school or district teams meet as a group to discuss their beliefs and philosophies. They then use the consensus process to develop the statement of philosophy for their program. At a minimum, a school counseling program philosophy should:

- Indicate an agreed-upon belief system about the ability of all students to achieve.
- Address every student.
- Address student developmental need and focus on primary prevention.
- Address the professional school counselor's role as an advocate for every student.
- Identify personnel to be involved in the delivery of program activities.
- Specify who will plan and manage the program.
- Use data to drive program decisions.

- Define how the program will be evaluated, and by whom.
- Include ethical guidelines or standards.

When developing a philosophy statement, the language and the meaning of the terms must be clear. For example, terms such as *manager*, *administrator*, and *planner* may have different connotations to different people on the team. It is important to clearly define who is generally responsible for all

program functions such as developing the program, planning activities, monitoring student progress, implementing the program, providing program administration and evaluating data.

Idaho's School Counseling Model

Philosophy Statement, shown in Figure 3.1 and in the [Appendix on p. 99](#), is an example of what we believe in relation to Idaho's students and school communities.

Figure 3.1

Idaho School Counseling Model **Philosophy Statement**

A school counseling program . . .

- Plays an integral role in facilitating the optimal development of all students.
- Uses a curriculum based on the educational needs of all students.
- Contains measurable student competencies which address behaviors necessary to function effectively.
- Seeks to attain educational excellence through individual excellence.
- Is an integral part of the student's total educational experience.
- Includes parent/guardian, teacher, administrator, school board, and community involvement.
- Addresses the needs of all students, K-12.
- Will be consistent with expected developmental stages of learning.
- Provides developmental as well as preventative and remedial services.
- Involves the school, family, and community.
- Includes counselor's professional development necessary to maintain quality programs.
- Evaluates program on stated objectives and related student achievement.

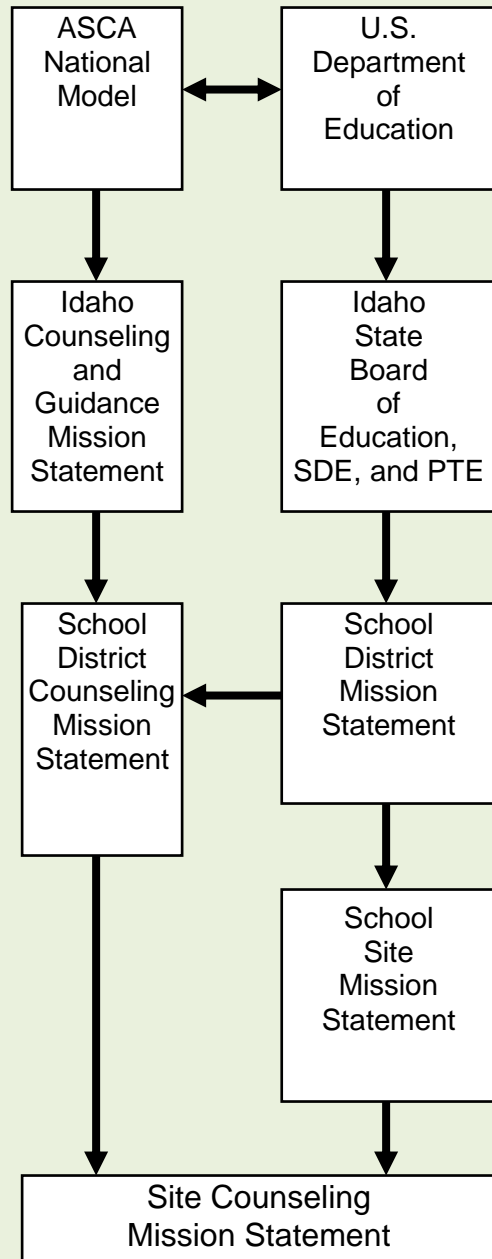
Mission Statement

One of the essential aspects of the foundation for a school counseling program is the creation of a mission statement, which gives your program overall direction and vision. A mission statement describes the program's purpose and provides the vision of what is desired for every student (Johnson & Johnson; Gysbers &

Henderson, 1998). A school counseling program mission statement aligns with and is a subset of the school or district's mission. Thus, the school counseling program supports the learning environment and at the same time makes unique contributions to meeting students' needs and nurturing their progress. The program's

mission statement should be clear, concise, and specific as to the program's intent and what the program will contribute.

Figure 3.2

Diagramming the Linkages

A mission statement:

- Keeps the program's focus on the beliefs, assumptions and philosophy.
- Establishes a structure for innovations.
- Creates a vision.
- Provides a foundation for purposeful change.

The mission statement content should:

- Be written with students as the primary clients.
- Advocate for the equity, access and success of every student.
- Be written for every student.
- Indicate the standards and competencies to be learned.
- Show links with the school, school district, State Board of Education, Division of Professional-Technical Education (PTE), or State Department of Education (SDE) mission statements.
- Indicate the long-range results desired for all students.

The goal is to design a mission statement that is specific, concise, clear and comprehensive. Figure 3.2 illustrates the system by which school sites gather information to develop the school counseling program mission statement. Sites, districts, states and national organization linkages provide the necessary articulation of information for a cohesive statement that is integral to the total educational program. Accordingly, the state school counseling program's mission statement is designed to reflect both the *ASCA National Model* and the State Board of Education. The site's counseling mission statement is designed to reflect the state school counseling model mission statement, the school district's mission statement, and the school site mission statement.

Idaho School Counseling Model Standards for Students: Academic and Professional-Technical, Life and Career, and Personal and Social Development

In 1997, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) published “Sharing the Vision: The National Standards for School Counseling Programs” (Campbell, & Dahir, 1997). This was followed by an implementation guide, “Vision into Action: Implementing the National Standards for School Counseling Programs” (Dahir, Sheldon, & Valiga, 1998). ASCA recognized the significance of these documents and the impact they have had on helping professional school counselors across the country design student competencies within their programs.

The *ASCA National Model for School Counseling Programs*® incorporated these ASCA Standards into its foundation. The ASCA Task Force participants agreed that the title of “National Standards for School Counseling Programs” did not accurately reflect the purpose of the standards. The standards are not for programs themselves, but rather for students. As such, the nine ASCA Standards, and likewise the nine Idaho standards, in the domain areas are actually *content standards for students*, much like states have content standards for students in math and science. The *Idaho School Counseling Model* uses the *Idaho School Counseling Model* Standards for Students in place of the ASCA National Standards. Professional school counselors in Idaho can use the standards for student competencies to help students achieve their highest potential. See [Appendix, pp. 93, 100, 109](#) for a comprehensive chart of the *Idaho School Counseling Program* Standards.

DOMAINS, STANDARDS, COMPETENCIES AND INDICATORS

The school counseling program facilitates student development in three domains to promote and enhance the learning process.

Standards for each domain provide a framework and direction for the state, school districts and individual school counseling programs. Student competencies define the specific knowledge, attitudes, and skills students should obtain. Student indicators demonstrate skill acquisition.

Domains

Domains are developmental areas that include standards and competencies and promote behaviors that enhance learning for all students. The three interrelated domains of student development are:

- Academic and Professional-Technical
- Life and Career
- Personal and Social

Each year, school counseling programs set measurable goals in the academic and professional-technical, life and career, and personal and social domain areas.

The school counseling program reflects the progression of student development throughout the K-12 sequence. The professional school counselor utilizes a variety of strategies, activities, delivery methods and resources to promote the desired student development. The professional school counselor’s responsibilities include the development, organization, implementation, coordination, and evaluation of the program. By accomplishing these, the goals of the school counseling program and the school can be realized.

Content Standards, Competencies, and Indicators

Standards are statements providing a description of what students should know

and be able to do at the highest level of expectation. Standards specify the level or rate of performance the students will achieve within a particular competency or set of indicators.

Competencies are specific expectations that students achieve in the content standard areas within the academic and professional-technical, life and career, and personal and social domains.

Indicators describe specific knowledge, skills or abilities that individuals demonstrate to meet a specific competency.

The standards and competencies selected for implementation should be directly aligned with the school's goals. The school's goals, in turn, must show a relationship with the district as well as the State Board of Education's goals. Data on goal attainment is reported by the school counseling program to the school and district administration, the advisory council, and also to the staff, parents or guardians and students, making the program's progress toward reaching the standards visible to all stakeholders.

CROSSWALKS TO IDAHO STANDARDS FOR STUDENT OUTCOMES

Crosswalking the standards for student competencies to the Idaho state academic standards, district and site documents and other national documents helps to show how a school counseling program aligns with the academic goals of the state and the school.

For example, standards for student outcomes may be aligned with:

- State education code, laws, and regulations.
- State Board of Education policies.
- Federal education policies.
- State academic content standards and frameworks.

- State accreditation standards.
- Local school board policies.

Crosswalk Student Standards Developmentally

The professional school counselor initiates and facilitates discussion with the staff and advisory board to determine which student competencies are the most important to deliver based upon site or district need. The competencies provide direction to assess student growth and progress toward achievement of the nine *Idaho School Counseling Model* Standards for Students. Competencies are often identified through the use of needs assessments and data disaggregation.

These competencies become a reality check to guide program development and assess student growth and development. Competencies help to identify and monitor knowledge, attitudes and skills that students acquire and demonstrate as a result of participating in a K-12 school counseling program. Competencies supporting the school mission can be prioritized by the professional school counselors, staff, and advisory council for the purpose of having an impact on critical data elements and addressing specific student needs. From a district perspective, some competencies may be critical across all grade levels, while a different school system will emphasize certain competencies at particular grade levels.

There are 120 indicators listed in the *Idaho School Counseling Model* Standards for Students; they are not meant to be all-inclusive. No one school or district can cover every competency every year. Those standards and competencies, prioritized by the school or district, guide the development of the program content in the academic and professional-technical, life and career, and personal and social domain areas and are an integral part of individual planning for students, guidance curriculum, responsive services, and system support.

Counseling teams meet to discuss and determine which competencies should be covered to meet student needs. Teams may decide that they must prioritize their competencies if they have too many. Some competencies may cross all levels, while others are grade-specific. This is the perfect place for a school counseling program to align itself with the school's academic goals. The professional school counselor can facilitate the discussion with the staff to clarify which student competencies are most important to assist students moving toward the school's specific academic goals.

Crosswalking Content Standards With the School Counseling Curriculum

As professional school counselors implement the school counseling curriculum and other activities, it is important to determine which competencies are being addressed. Crosswalks are generally a checklist of standards and competencies related to a scope and sequence of instruction, whether developmental or academic.

Crosswalking with current counseling curriculum offers counselors an opportunity to evaluate their existing program.

Aligning the school counseling curriculum to the nine content standards ensures that students acquire competencies that are integrated and cross curricular. Competencies may also be met when professional school counselors provide individual student planning or responsive services.

Evaluating the Crosswalk to Assess What is Missing

After the standards are crosswalked by developmental level and current curriculum or activity, an assessment is made to determine which competencies are or are not being addressed.

Competencies are representative and are used as a catalyst for the adaptation, modification or adoption of competencies. Creative and appropriate modification for school site, district or even state needs is expected.